

Chapter 47

Chapter 47 began with a single voice, trembling but determined, echoing through a phone line that connected me to a courtroom—and the rest of the world. On June 23, 2021, I finally had the opportunity to speak openly in a public hearing, to say what I had been silenced from saying for years. As I sat in my living room in Los Angeles with Hesam holding my hand, I felt the weight of the moment press down on me. I had prepared countless versions of what I wanted to say, but nothing could fully erase the fear. Still, I knew the truth had to be heard.

The fear I felt wasn't just about public judgment; it came from years of having my voice used by others, sometimes even against me. I worried that speaking honestly would make people dismiss me or call me unstable. But underneath that fear was something stronger—a deep, persistent knowledge that I deserved freedom. I wanted people to understand what I had endured, and I hoped sharing my truth would make a difference for others, too. So I took a breath, steadied myself, and spoke—not for the cameras or headlines, but for myself.

I told the judge that I wasn't okay, no matter how many times I'd said it before to protect others or keep peace. I admitted I had cried daily, struggled with depression, and felt like I was drowning in silence. I confessed how I often lied to the world about being happy, hoping if I said it enough, it might become true. But happiness can't exist where control replaces compassion. I even joked, bitterly, that maybe I should drink alcohol after everything my heart had endured. And in that moment, there was no mask—just me.

My words poured out, fast and full of raw pain. I spoke of how isolated I felt after every phone call ended—surrounded by no's, constantly shut down, bullied, and left to feel invisible in a life that was still mine in name but not in reality. What I wanted wasn't

unreasonable. I longed for basic human rights: to marry, to have a family, to make my own choices. And after years of being monitored, manipulated, and misunderstood, just being heard felt like a small victory. The judge's response gave me a flicker of hope. She acknowledged the courage it took to speak and thanked me. That small validation meant more than anyone could know.

For years, I had been held in place by fear, shame, and the belief that maybe I had caused this. That maybe I deserved it. That's what emotional abuse does—it rewires how you see yourself until even freedom feels like a dream too far away to reach. But deep down, the woman I'd always been—the one who sang with joy, who loved hard, who believed in something bigger than herself—had never disappeared. She had just been buried beneath layers of pain and silence. When my family forced me into that facility, something broke. It was more than a betrayal—it was the erasure of my humanity.

The worst part wasn't the isolation, the rules, or the constant scrutiny. It was losing my sense of worth. They took away my autonomy and replaced it with doubt. Even my faith had been shaken. I stopped believing in God because I thought if He were real, how could He allow this? But as I reached for the end of the conservatorship, I found a small ember still burning inside me—the belief that something better was possible. And that faith slowly returned.

Now, I understand the importance of personal voice—of agency. It's not just about being free on paper; it's about knowing you deserve that freedom, without apology or permission. The courage it took to speak in that courtroom became a turning point. It wasn't just legal progress—it was spiritual and emotional reclamation. I hope my story encourages others to question systems that silence them, and to know that no matter how long they've been unheard, their voice still holds power.